



**Raffles Institution
2024 Year 6 Preliminary Examination
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1**

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

28 August 2024

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

Passage 1. *Michael E. Mann contends that lifestyle changes are not enough to save the planet.*

- 1 Everyone faces choices every day that carry a climate cost. Do we turn the lights on in the morning, or is the light of daybreak sufficient for finding matching socks? Do we feast on bacon and eggs for breakfast, or will a bowl of oatmeal suffice? There is a lot of talk these days about the need to lead lower-carbon lifestyles. There is also a lot of finger-pointing going on and, some argue, virtue signalling. But who is truly walking the climate talk? The carnivore who doesn't fly? The vegan who travels to see family abroad? If nobody is without carbon sin, who gets to cast the first lump of coal? If all climate advocates were expected to live off the grid, eating only what they could grow themselves and wearing only the clothes they'd knitted from scratch, there wouldn't be much of a climate movement. That level of sacrifice is unacceptable to most.

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- 2 We don't need to ban cars; we need to electrify them (and we need that electricity to come from clean energy). We don't need to ban burgers; we need climate-friendly beef. To spur these changes, we need to put a price on carbon, to incentivise polluters to invest in these solutions. Though air travel accounts for only a paltry 2% of global emissions, whether or not climate scientists should fly consumes far more than 2% of my Twitter timeline. Unfortunately, sometimes doing science means travelling great distances, and we don't always have the time or luxury to take slower low-carbon options. We have a job to do, after all. But still, a single scientist, or even hundreds of scientists, choosing to never fly again is not going to help the environment. Purchasing carbon offsets for flights is a viable means of decarbonising your air travel, for now. However, the true solution, pricing carbon, requires policy change.

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- 3 There is a long history of industry-funded 'deflection campaigns' aiming to divert attention from big polluters and place the burden on individuals. Individual action is important and something we should all champion. But appearing to force people to give up meat, or travel, or other things central to the lifestyle they've chosen to live is politically dangerous: it plays right into the hands of climate change deniers who tend to portray climate champions as freedom-hating totalitarians.

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- 4 The bigger issue is that focusing on individual choices around air travel and beef consumption heightens the risk of losing sight of the gorilla in the room: civilisation's reliance on fossil fuels for energy and transport overall, which accounts for roughly two-thirds of global carbon emissions. We need systemic changes that will reduce everyone's carbon footprint, whether or not they care. The good news is we have tactics to bring environmentally friendly (and to be clear, these need not be lifestyle-disrupting) options to fruition: pricing carbon emissions and creating incentives for renewable energy and reduced consumption. By putting a price on carbon, people can actually make money by reducing emissions, selling their services to corporations that are always looking for ways to cut costs. Never underestimate the resourcefulness of people when there's money to be made! But a price on carbon needs to be designed such that marginalised communities most at risk from such a climate impact aren't adversely impacted economically as well.

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- 5 This is why we really need political change at every level, from local leaders to national legislators all the way up to the President. We need change not just at the breakfast table, but at the ballot box as well.

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Passage 2. *Jason Marks argues that personal action matters if we are to avert the climate catastrophe.*

- 1 It's important for the environmental movement to keep insisting that individual behaviour changes are not only required but righteous. Such real talk opens the way to having a public conversation about how to fairly navigate the changes to come. But, for me at least, beyond the cold political calculus is the more important issue of integrity: we need to walk the talk.

- 2 It's essential that each of us who cares about the fate of the planet at least makes an attempt to align our individual actions with our role as public citizens. This doesn't have to involve foisting guilt on people; it should take the form of a steely determination to transform our way of living. 5

- 3 Because here's the thing: When we choose to eat less meat or take the bus instead of driving or have fewer children, we are making a statement that our actions matter. In doing so, it amplifies political activism. It's precisely the difficulty of such personal changes that make them valuable; to borrow from John F. Kennedy, we should align our individual actions with our beliefs not because it's easy—but because it's hard. In doing so, we are likely to find that the effort is empowering. When we take responsibility for the environmental consequences of our daily actions, we feel like we are in control. And when we're in control of our own life, perhaps then we'll feel more empowered to take control of—or at least play a role in—larger political systems. 10 15

- 4 Which is to say that personal action and collective, political action are self-reinforcing. Individual lifestyle changes can act as a kind of alloy that strengthens political activism. Taking the first step in walking more lightly on the planet is all the more important because it creates momentum. 20

- 5 So maybe we should agree, as a movement, to stop rhetorically putting personal action and collective action in opposition to each other as if it was some kind of activism zero-sum game. Ultimately, how, when, where, and in what form to act is up to us. The most important thing is simply to act and not overthink it. Don't let anyone tell us differently.

Passage 3. *Lifestyle blogger Joanna Ma assesses the impact of paper straws.*

- 1 It's safe to say that the global campaign against the use of plastic straws reached fever pitch this year, but are paper straws really the eco-friendly alternative they claim to be?
- 2 The main argument for using paper straws instead of plastic ones is that paper is biodegradable. This means that it can naturally be broken down and won't end up floating in our oceans or being swallowed by turtles. However, the fix isn't as simple as swapping plastic for paper. While paper straws, unlike plastic ones, will naturally decompose, or break down, into smaller pieces, there is still a chance that small animals could swallow these little bits of paper. 5
- 3 The recent switch has seen many opt for paper straws to do their part, instead of say, metal straws. However, paper straws are still single-use waste items. The truth is this: people want to reduce their plastic usage without giving up convenience. 10
- 4 We ought to consider the impact of our actions carefully instead of jumping on the bandwagon. The only guaranteed way to make a difference to the environment is for people to stop using single-use straws altogether. There are already so many existing tools that can perform the duty of straws. Why can't we just drink from our cups? 15
- 5 Ultimately, we need to change our lifestyles so that we use items that can be used again and again. Even if we create products using the most environmentally-friendly materials, as long as they are single-use products, the Earth won't last.